Appl. No. 09/437,833
Amdt. Dated 10/13/2005
Reply to Office action of 07/28/2005

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior version, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (currently amended) A system for maintaining and distributing a plurality of respective work schedules generated on behalf of at least one manager supervising a plurality of workers, and for enabling ones of the workers to initiate changes to their own respective work schedules after the work schedules are distributed to the workers, the system comprising at least the following:

    a schedule generator configured to generate data representing the plurality of respective work schedules for the plurality of workers;

    a database in communication with said schedule generator for storing said data; and

    at least one employee interface positioned at at least one location within a work environment, wherein said at least one employee interface is in communication with said schedule generator and is configured to display data representing respective ones of the work schedules to corresponding ones of the workers, is adapted to enable at least a first one of the workers to post at least a portion of his or her own respective work schedule for acceptance by a second one of the workers after the work schedules are distributed to the workers; and~~wherein the schedule generator provides an incentive to the second one of the workers to accept the portion of the first one of the workers' work schedule.~~

    a sheets sub-module configured, via a software configuration, to provide an incentive to the second one of the workers to accept the portion of the first one of the workers' work schedule.

2.   (original) The system of Claim 1 wherein said work schedule data comprises data regarding employee work schedules that are not generated around one or more predetermined work shifts.

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3.   (previously presented) The system of Claim 1, wherein the employee interface is adapted to enable the workers to initiate changes to their respective work schedules without action by the at least one manager.

4.   (previously presented) The system of Claim 1 further including an attendance module configured to utilize said data representing the work schedules and data regarding which workers are present in the work place to determine worker attendance.

5.   (original) The system of Claim 1 further including a remote user interface in communication with said database to facilitate access by a remote user.

6.   (original) The system of Claim 1 wherein said employee interface comprises a networked computer having software to facilitate access to said work schedule data.

7.   (original) The employee interface of Claim 6 wherein said employee interface further includes a printer.

8.   (currently amended) A system to distribute a work schedule to a work force of employees and thereafter allow respective ones of the employees to initiate at least one modification to their own respective work schedules after distribution of the work schedule to the employees, the system comprising at least the following:

at least one data storage device to store schedule data corresponding to the work schedule;

at least one computing device in communication with said at least one data storage device to organize, oversee distribution, and enable at least a first one of the employees to initiate at least one modification to his or her own respective schedule data; and

at least one kiosk located remotely from said computing device and in communication with said computing device to provide an interface for the first one of the employees to view his or her work schedule, to post at least a portion of his or her own work schedule for acceptance by at least a second one of the employees after distribution of the work schedule to the employees, and to provide an incentive, via a software

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configuration, to the second one of the employees to accept the portion of the first one
of the employees' work schedule.

9.   (original) The system of Claim 8 wherein said at least one kiosk includes a display and
user interface software.

10.   (original) The system of Claim 8 further including an overhead display monitor in
communication with said computing device to display schedule information to a plurality of
workers.

11.   (original) The system of Claim 8 further including an interface with an activity
monitoring device in communication with said computing device to determine the presence of a
worker at a place of work.

12.   (original) The system of Claim 8 further including an interface with an activity
monitoring device in communication with said computing device to monitor the activity of a
worker at a place of work.

13.   (original) The system of Claim 11 wherein said monitoring device comprises an
electronic time clock.

14.   (original) The system of Claim 8 wherein said kiosk comprises a networked computer
having software configured to provide an employee interface.

15.   (original) The system of Claim 8 wherein said data storage device comprises a hard disk
drive.

16.   (currently amended) A method for distributing a work schedule to employees and
thereafter enabling the employees at least to initiate at least one modification to a previously
distributed work schedule, the method comprising at least the following:

   storing data representing the previously distributed work schedule in a database, wherein
      said data defines the work schedules of a plurality of employees;

   providing employee access to said work schedules at one or more terminals located at one
      or more locations within a place of business;

creating opportunities for at least a first one of the employees to at least initiate at least

one modification of his or her own respective work schedule by posting at least a

portion of his or her work schedule for acceptance by at least a second one of the

employees;

transmitting said opportunities to said one or more terminals wherein at said one or more

terminals at least the second one of the employees may access their own respective

work schedule to accept at least the portion of the previously distributed work

schedule posted by the first one of the employees, thereby enabling both the first one

and the second one of the employees at least to initiate at least one modification of

their own respective work schedules; and, providing an incentive, via a software

configuration, to the second one of the employees to accept the portion of the first one

of the employees' work schedule.

17.   (previously presented) The method of Claim 16, further comprising evaluating whether
the second one of the employees is qualified to accept the portion of the work schedule posted by
the first one of the employees.

18.   (original) The method of Claim 16 wherein said creating opportunities comprises
generating sheets and displaying said sheets on at least one of an overhead display or at least one
of a terminal.

19.   (previously presented) The method of Claim 16 further including the steps of:

establishing a pool to which employees may post shifts that are available for trade;

allowing the first one of the employees to post at least one of the shifts to said pool;

allowing the second one of the employees to accept the at least one of the shifts from said
pool; and

modifying said employee work schedules based on said posting to said pool and said
acceptance of shifts from said pool.

20.   (original) The method of Claim 19 wherein said pool comprises a listing stored on said
database of proposed shift changes posted by employees.

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21.   (original) The method of Claim 19 further including displaying said shifts posted to said pool on a display for viewing by a plurality of employees.

22.   (original) The method of Claim 16 wherein said one or more terminals comprise one or more overhead display monitors and one or more kiosks.

23.   (original) The method of Claim 16 further including the steps of:

modifying said employee schedules in responses to an employee signing-up for said opportunities for employees to modify their work schedule; and

storing said modified schedules in said database.

24.   (original) The method of Claim 18, wherein said terminal comprises a kiosk.

25.   (currently amended) A method for modifying a schedule to account for changes in workload occurring after the schedule has been distributed to employees, the method comprising at least the following:

creating a sheet having one or more slots for a work shift, each of the slots corresponding to an offer to adjust, after the schedule has been distributed to the employees, a number of employees specified by the schedule to work during the work shift;

transmitting said sheet for viewing by a plurality of employees who may accept the offer so as to adjust the number of employees scheduled to work during the work shift by altering his or her respective work shift in response to the sheet;

providing an incentive, via a software configuration, to the employees to accept the offer;

monitoring for a sign-up to a slot on said sheet by a signing-up employee accepting the offer; and

upon detecting a sign-up to said sheet:

accepting said sign-up onto said sheet;

modifying said sheet to reflect said sign-up ;

modifying said signing-up employee's schedule to reflect said sign-up.

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26. (original) The method of Claim 25 wherein creating a sheet comprises using a computer to create a sign-up page having one or more sign-up slots to increase or decrease the number of workers scheduled to work during a particular period.

27. (original) The method of Claim 25 wherein said sign-up comprises an employee signing up on a slot to either work said work shift on the sheet or take off the particular work shift on the sheet.

28. (original) The method of Claim 25 wherein transmitting further comprises showing said sheet to only employees qualified to work said work shift listed on said sheet.

29. (original) The method of Claim 25 further including closing said sheet if all of said one or more slots are filled due to sign-ups.

30. (original) The method of Claim 25 wherein posting comprises displaying said sheet on at least one over head display or making said sheet available via an employee interface.

31. (currently amended) A method for employees to at least initiate at least one change to their work schedule after distribution of the work schedule to the employees using a scheduling system, the method comprising at least the following:

creating a proposed shift trade after distribution of the work schedule, in which a first one of the employees posts at least a portion of a work shift to which the first one of the employees is assigned by the work schedule for acceptance by at least a second one of the employees, said proposed shift trade including at least posting employee shift information regarding shift hours and shift date;

providing an incentive, via a software configuration, to the second one of the employees to accept the portion of the first one of the employees' work shift;

posting said proposed shift trade to a shift pool, said shift pool configured to accept responses to said posting from other employees;

displaying said shift pool to a plurality of other employees;

monitoring said shift pool for a response from at least the second employee to accept said proposed shift trade; and

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whereby upon receiving said response, said method:

accepts said response by evaluating whether the at least second employee is qualified to work the portion of the shift offered by the first one of the employees;

updates the work schedules of said first one of the employees and said second one of the employees to reflect the proposed shift trade; and

removes said proposed shift trade from said shift pool.

32. (original) The method of Claim 31 wherein said shift pool comprises a listing of proposed shift trades that can be viewed by employees seeking to modify their schedule.

33. (original) The method of Claim 31 wherein said posting allows other employees to view and sign-up for said proposed shift trade.

34. (original) The method of Claim 31 further including the step of displaying to an employee on an employee interface only the proposed shift trades that said employee on an employee interface is qualified to perform.

35. (original) The method of Claim 31 wherein creating a proposed shift trade comprises:

logging onto said scheduling system at an employee interface; and

selecting which shift hours of a proposed shift trade said posting employee desires to post.

36-43 (canceled).

44. (currently amended) A scheduling apparatus for creating and displaying a work schedule and for enabling ones of the employees at least to propose changes to the work schedule after the work schedule is distributed, the scheduling apparatus comprising:

means for creating a schedule for each of a plurality of employees;

means for storing said schedule as schedule data;

means for allowing said employees to view said schedule data at a remote location;

means for retrieving said schedule data from said means for storing;

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means for displaying said schedule data to at least one of said employees at said remote location;

means for enabling at least a first one of said employees to post at least a portion of his or her own respective schedule data for acceptance by at least a second one of the employees after distribution of the schedule data to the employees; and

means for providing an incentive, via a software configuration, to the second employee to accept the portion of the first employees' schedule data.

45.   (original) The scheduling apparatus of Claim 44, further including means for printing said schedule upon request of one of said employees.

46.   (original) The scheduling apparatus of Claim 44 further including means for posting one or more sheets for display to said employees whereby said one or more sheets comprise a request to employees to optionally sign-up for increased or decreased work hours as specified on said one or more sheets.

47.   (original) The scheduling apparatus of Claim 44 further including means for posting employee initiated shift trade requests for viewing and sign-up by said one or more employees.

48.   (original) The scheduling apparatus of Claim 44 further including means for comparing schedule data regarding employees that are scheduled to be working and worker status data regarding employees that are actually at work to determine which employees are scheduled but not working.

49.   (currently amended) A computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer program logic recorded thereon for providing an automated employee schedule distribution system for use by an entity to distribute employee schedules, and to thereafter to assist in the modification of employee schedules in response to changes in anticipated workload occurring after distribution of the employee schedules to the employees, said computer usable medium comprising at least the following:

computer program code logic configured to store schedule data on a storage medium, wherein said schedule data comprises the work schedules of a plurality of employees;

computer program code logic configured to monitor for requests for said employee schedules from employees at employee interfaces;

computer program code logic configured to transmit said employee schedules to said employee interfaces;

computer program code logic configured to allow for establishment of at least one sheet containing respective slots for employees to sign-up for additional or reduced hours, each of the slots corresponding to an offer to adjust a number of employees specified by the previously distributed schedule to work during the work shift;

computer program code logic configured to display said at least one sheet to at least one employee who may accept the offer so as to alter his or her respective work shift in response to the sheet;

computer program code logic configured to provide an incentive, via a software configuration, to the at least one employee to accept the offer; and

computer program code logic configured to accept a sign-up by the employee to said at least one sheet.

50.   (original) The computer program product of Claim 49 wherein said storage medium comprises a hard disk drive.

51.   (original) The computer program product of Claim 49 further including computer program code logic configured to allow a posting employee to post proposed shift trades to a shift pool.

52.   (original) The computer program product of Claim 51 further including computer program code logic configured to display said shift pool so that employees other than posting employees can view said proposed shift trades and sign-up to work shifts in said shift pool of proposed shift trades.

53-59. (cancelled).